

# A FAR CRY

The Story of a Happy Christmas

By MAGLYN DUPREC

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It had not been easy for John Wellington, Sr., to select his Christmas gifts this year, although his old wife and one or two servants were all for whom he had to provide. It was Christmas eve, and he had been through bookstores, where handsomely bound volumes of story writers, philosophers and poets were displayed on every counter; through brilliantly lighted jewelry stores, where precious stones gleamed softly against backgrounds of rich velvet; through the perfumed shop of the florist, where delicate blossoms from famous green-houses breathed forth a fragrance that gave the lie to the bitter wind and swirling snow outside. With each he had left a generous check, but always with an unsatisfied feeling that he was paying for something he did not care to have. Finally, he had been lured into a shop whose windows displayed an attractive lot of toys for small boys, and he had selected from its almost endless store of guns, wagons, wonderful animals and exciting "wind instruments," a red tin horn, costing him only 25 cents.

This had given him more satisfaction than any purchase he had made for many times that amount.

The other parcels he had ordered delivered, but this he had carried himself, as though it were something too precious to be trusted to other hands. It was this that he unwrapped before



"Bought it for a Memory, Mother."

the big, old-fashioned fireplace where his wife sat, as soon as he had come in from the storm-swept street. As he held it up where the red gleam of the firelight was caught on its rounded surface, a look of surprise swept over the gentle old face near him.

"Why, John, you never bought that! Surely they handed you someone else's purchase."

"No," he said, his face growing suddenly tender. "I bought it."

His wife, with a woman's quick instinct, divined the reason. She stepped nearer to him and laying her hand on his arm, looked at him with pleading eyes, saying: "But why, father?"

It was the first time she had called him father for a decade past, and there was a pitiful break in the old man's voice as he replied: "I bought it for a memory, mother."

That was the first time in ten years he had called her mother, and at the sound of the name, she too, gave way—gave way, womanlike, leaning her head on his arm, and sobbing out a grief that had silently stolen the roses from her cheeks and the light from her eyes as the years had gone by. The old man's arm went round her lover-fashion, while his hand gently stroked her soft white hair. "There, there, mother, dear. The boy's not dead. I'll find him for you, if I have to hunt the world over. I was to blame," he said, with such infinite regret in his voice that the old wife reached up and drew his head down to her face and whispered: "Don't say it so, father. I know you thought you were doing the best for the boy when you sent him away to do or die on his own account, and somehow I feel tonight, as I have never felt before, that he may be found."

As she spoke, something in her tones made him feel that at least his wife had forgiven him entirely for the decision which, ten years before, had robbed her of her only child. Always before this he felt through all his gentle and kindly care for her, that tucked away somewhere in the silent recesses of her being there was a little bitterness against him for the childish state he had brought upon her. But now that he himself had come to repent it, he knew beyond a doubt that the last drop of his bitterness had been swallowed up in a great stream of forgiveness.

He sat down in his great arm chair and looked up with misty eyes at his

wife. "You're right, mother. I did think it best. I would rather have seen him dead than worthless, and I knew if he had worth, he would conquer himself, and rise without my aid, more of a man than with it." She put her arm around his neck and patted his cheek. "He has risen somewhere, father. I know it. He could not be your son and fail," she said, the loyalty and love of a lifetime lighting her face with a soft radiance.

He took up the tin horn from the table where he had laid it, and fondled it as if it were fraught with memories, instead of merely recalling them.

"It's ten years since he left," he said, "what a man he must be now—31 to-night. But I was thinking when I bought this, of the time when he was such a little yellow-haired toddler, and almost drove us wild with just such a horn as this at Christmas time."

She took the horn from him, and looking dreamily at it, said: "We'll keep this, father; maybe Jack's boy will some time make these old walls ring with it at Christmas time as he made them ring, himself, so many years ago."

"God grant that he may!" said the old man. "Do you remember, mother, how he used to come chasing down the street after me when I would start off to my work in the morning?"

"Yes, and how you would pick him up and carry him back to me," she said. "And do you remember the time we came near losing him, the day he ran away to hunt you in the city?"

"Who that saw you then could forget it, mother," and he took her hand in his and drew her down to the chair beside him. They sat hand in hand in the silence, given over to vague memories of the past, only the ticking of the old clock keeping an accompaniment to their dreams of other Christmas Eves. They were sitting thus an hour later when a servant opened the door and said, respectfully: "There is a telephone call for Mr. Wellington."

"Don't you answer it, Mary?" the old man asked, loath to leave his comfortable chair and dreams.

"No, sir. It is especially for you. A long distance call, I think."

"Who the deuce wants to talk to me from a distance?" he said, as he rose and went in the telephone in the hall.

"Hello, who is this?" he asked, as he picked up the receiver. "Yes, this is John Wellington."

"A party in Chicago wants to talk to you," said the long distance operator.

"All right, put him up. Who in thunder do I know in Chicago?" he exclaimed to himself, pressing the receiver closer to his ear.

A peculiar wailing sound was all he heard, and a puzzled expression crept over his face. "Talk a little louder. I can't understand a thing you are saying," and he listened more intently. The wailing grew a little louder, but still it was nothing but an inarticulate wail, and for a moment the old man looked thoroughly disgusted.

"Confound it!" he shouted at last. "You sound exactly like a mewling infant. I don't know what you are saying."

Then a man's laugh was heard, followed by "A merry Christmas, father. You know exactly what he sounds like, but you don't know what he is saying," and there was another laugh, ringing joyful, as in his boyhood days, and the old man knew he had found his own.

"Jack, Jack, my boy, is that you?" he shouted, staggered by the unexpected joy of his sudden discovery.

"None other, father, but what you just heard was another Jack, the second Jack Wellington, Jr. He has just arrived, and his command of English is somewhat limited, but he was doing his best to introduce himself, and invite you and grandma to Christmas dinner with him, and—"

"Oh, Jack, Jack, where have you been all these years?" sobbed the old man.

"Catch the Lake Shore Limited to-night, father, bring mother with you, and I'll tell you all about it when you get here. You've got time. You see, father, I've kept track of you and mother all along. I wasn't going to let anything happen to the old folks, and—there was a catch in his voice. "I've got the right kind of a report to make, father. Never fear that."

The old man could scarcely contain himself as he listened, pressing the receiver closer and closer to his ear, as though he feared some bit of the precious news might escape him. Then he shouted: "All right, son, we're coming on the next train." He left the receiver dangling on the wall, and started on a run to the room where his wife sat, shouting as he went: "Mother, mother, it's Jack—our boy. Get ready, mother. I'm going to have a cab here in 20 minutes to catch the train for Chicago." She had risen with a wild look on her face, and had started to question him, but he shook his head, saying: "No, no, I'll explain later. Not got time now. We're going to spend Christmas with Jack and his boy."

He started for the phone again, and then dashed back, exclaiming: "Pack the tin horn if you don't pack another thing. Any child that can cry loud enough to be heard all the way from Chicago ought to have breath enough to blow that horn," and he dashed again to the phone to order a cab.

### Natural Deduction.

Peckem—I can't understand why so many people look upon Friday as the unluckiest day of the week.

Mrs. Peckem—Why, do you consider it lucky?

Peckem—It must be. Few people get married on that day.—Chicago Daily News.

# Hiding the Christmas Gifts

By J. M. WALCH



UH! looks something like snow, at that," said the man, waiting his turn at the barber shop, going to the door and looking out. "It's the dickens what a short time there is between Fourth of July and Christmas, these years. I can remember the time when there was a stretch of about 14 years between the Fourth of July and Christmas, can't you tellers?" Way, Charman'll be clomping along before we know it. Right now the time is drawing pretty close when a fellow will have to be mighty careful about opening bureau drawers when his wife is in the room if he doesn't want to be scared into a con- dition when she notices what he's doing. Y'see, this is just about the beginning of the season when wives start to hiding the Christmas presents they've bought for their husbands. Funny gag, that, too.

Then there's another thing about this Christmas present hiding business. Most men stick it out that women are the curious, inquisitive sex, don't they? Well, I don't believe it. In my opinion men are a whole heap more curious and inquisitive than women. Fact is, I know it.

For instance, a husband, long about this season that's approaching is groping around for a fresh shirt upon getting up in the morning. He yanks out the wrong drawer of the bureau. Well, on this morning he pulls out the bottom bureau drawer, say, and his wife, who is fixing her hair at the dresser in another part of the room, catches him in the act just in time, lets out her little squawk, and rushes over to the bureau and pushes the drawer shut.

"So it's there, he," he says to her. "Scuse me for fixing, and then the multilooped goes on grinning like a chimpanzee while he brushes his hair. Then he turns to her.

"Watchoo got in there, anyway?" he asks her.

"She tells him, with a grimace, and very properly, that it's none of his business. And she adds something about folks that 'rubber.'

"But, say, p'wan and tell me what watchoo got in there, won't you?" he tries again, wheedlingly.

"Whereupon his wife makes mention of that fellow that met an untimely end through curiosity.

"That's all right about the cat," says the husband then, "but I'll bet you a new rubber plant that it's cigars that you've got in there." And then he begins to look a bit alarmed. "Say, I hope not, though, I'm thinking about swearing off smoking soon now, any- how."

"But this hint of his about the cigars doesn't get the least bit of a rise out of her. Not much. Nothing whatever doing in the conversational line on her part.

"Oh, I'm a pinhead, sure enough," her husband says then, after a pause, and still consumed and just eaten alive by curiosity. "I might have known all the time that it is a shaving outfit. That's exactly what it is, for a sure thing."

However, his wife most carefully adjusts her side combs and quite refrains from talking. Then he sticks his hands into his trousers pockets and looks her over quizzically.

"Aw, come on, now, like a good girl, and tell me if you've gone and got me that bath robe that we were looking at in the shop window the other afternoon," he says to her in his most persuasive tone.

"Say, Minnie, you might let a fellow see what you've got tucked in there at that."

"Just compare the attitude of the average husband in this Christmas gift business with the position of his wife on that same subject. She doesn't really want to know what he is going to give her for Christmas. She wants to be 'sprised.'

"Look, here, hunk," he says to her some morning along toward Christmas—usually he puts it off till about the last day, when everything is all packed over in the stores—look where my dear, whatchee want for Christmas hey? It's up to you, you know."

"Why, the very idea," she exclaims "Up to me! Pre-eteroom!" What, it wouldn't be any Christmas present at all if I told you what I wanted you to get for me?"

"Oh, that's one way of looking at it," he says. "But, d'ye know, I was thinking about getting you a—"

"Shush! Stop!" she cries. "Don't you dare tell me, Jack Gosling. Don't you dare!"

"All the same, she's foxed at that. After a while an idea strikes her.

"You know, of course, Jack," she says, misgivingly, that if you are married about the size of things, why your sister Agnes and I were exactly the same size in our children, and she—"

"But, fix, he breaks in. It isn't anything that comes in sizes. It's one of those—"

"And again her fingers go into her ears. The spouse is the whole thing to her, and she is resolved not to get in advance what he is thinking of getting for her.

# This Is Christmas Week

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A Mistletoe Bow-Wow

**He Was a New Yorker.**  
 A New Yorker who was in town this Spring was introduced to a man one day, who inquired: "Are you from New York City?" "Yes," he replied. "Have you been here?" "I have been here for the last thirty years." "Then you know all about the city of course. I want to make a few inquiries. You've been down to the Statue of Liberty and?" "Excuse me, but I haven't been down there. I've simply seen the figure from afar." "Well, you know, when you go down to the Battery you come to a place they call the—"

**Teddy Bear Passes.**  
 The sign of the Teddy bear is over the iron parlor window, he now lies forgotten in the garret, childhood's cavern of dead dreams. During his

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brief reign he lorded it by giving whim, but the infant reichstag arose, and now none so poor as do his ex- perience—Washington Post.

**More Murder in Tennessee.**  
 The State Supreme Court has held in a Knoxville murder case that when an officer undertakes to arrest a man, the officer should have a warrant. The Knoxville Sentin- el, Chattanooga News.